

SMART **RIDE**

A Special Supplement to Sea&Shore 2010

www.safetycenter.navy.mil

Are You Ready for the Track?

MENTORSHIP

Blake Young and Kevin Schwantz Share Their Stories

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A Special Supplement to Sea&Shore

Smart Ride is a special Issue magazine resulting from a close partnership with the Motorcycle Safety Foundation, a not-for-profit organization promoting motorcycle safety and awareness. This publication can never take the place of time, experience and practice on the roads. It is critically important that every rider take an approved motorcycle safety course and continue the training continuum throughout his or her riding life!

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Cover photo by Dave Smith.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

You are holding the third edition of *Smart Ride* magazine, an experiment The Naval Safety Center started in 2008 when we realized there was a significant portion of the Navy and Marine Corps population that was being underserved – motorcycle riders! The first issue was really just trial and error. We knew we wanted it to be a magazine by riders and for riders. We wanted to include articles that would help riders be more successful on two-wheels, not scold them into four-wheeled vehicles. However, there's no way around the fact that that riding is risky and we certainly never intended to sugar-coat the dangers.

We've seen a lot of changes in just a few short years. The Military Sport Bike Rider Course is now well-established and Navy and Marine Corps leadership has been very involved in making sure sport bike riders comply with this training requirement.

There was a lot of pushback when the course first started. Plenty of riders wrote or phoned to tell us they were tired of being picked on. However, when half of the personal motor vehicle fatalities across the fleet take place on motorcycles, and only a fraction of the population rides, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that something's got to give. Add to that the fact that most of these fatalities are sport bike riders, and you can see that some sort of tailor-made training was required.

The good news is that most of the riders who have taken the MSRC have reported that it was a lot of fun – even if they had to be dragged kicking and screaming to the range. And most of the rest agree that even a bad day on a motorcycle is better than a good day at work.

Of course, the MSRC takes place in a parking lot, and although the speeds get higher than in the BRC, they're nowhere near highway speeds. That's why track days are getting so popular. In the last few years there's been a big leadership mindset change about track days, and many sport bike riders are getting the chance to go as fast as they are capable of going in an environment without the variables of road debris or oncoming traffic. The Marine Corps has really led the way with track days, many of which have occurred on Marine Corps installations.

Now that *Smart Ride* is turning three, I think we've found a good balance. Riders across the fleet are doing their part by contributing articles and voicing their opinions. In this year's edition we take an in-depth look at fatigue and motorcycling in an article contributed by a former Surgeon General of the Navy. You'll also find an informative article about bike modifications and one that helps you analyze your riding behaviors so you can reduce the probability of serious mishaps.

Our cover riders for this year's edition are Kevin Schwantz and Blake Young. Kevin is the 1993 500cc World Champion who amassed 25 Grand Prix wins, 21 lap records, and 29 pole positions in his career. Now he's teaching others his winning ways at the Kevin Schwantz School. Blake is an up-and-coming rider who realizes the value of a good mentor.

Let us know what you think and what you want to see in next year's edition. Send your comments, suggestions and articles to april.phillips@navy.mil. We hope you enjoy *Smart Ride* 2010. Until next year, enjoy the ride!

April Phillips



Ask the Pros - Ronnie Renner

What's Hot



Check out your on base Track Day...

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Events



Semper Ride visits Japan
12,000 Marines view Semper Ride

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USMC Motorcycle News



Marine Corp orders changes.
Reflective vests no longer required

[More »](#)

FORUM ACTIVITY

- Re:Canard's Racer X Column** # 57
MEXR
2/1/2010 7:19 PM
- Re:What happened to EMIG??** # 22
Amikemant
2/1/2010 7:18 PM
- Re:Canard's Racer X Column** # 57
Jmar
2/1/2010 7:17 PM
- Re:What happened to EMIG??** # 22
Ozy
2/1/2010 7:16 PM
- Re:How should GuyB deal with ...** # 134
Ozy
2/1/2010 7:14 PM
- Re:Congrats to Josh Clark** # 8
MEXR
2/1/2010 7:12 PM

More: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#)

[More Forums »](#)

Semper Ride Videos



Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Etiam augue nunc, pretium ullamcorper congue sit amet, feugiat et arcu. Sed mi leo, vehicula vel tristique et, tincidunt a velit.

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Industry News

Asterisk Superpass Auction On ebay (01/27/2010)Auction benefits Asterisk Medical Center

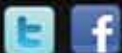
Stig Makes The Move (01/27/2010) Ohlins man heads East

Thomas, Nicoli on Pit Pass Radio (01/26/2010)Jason Thomas, Kurt Nicoli, Ralph Sheheen tonight

Red Bull X Fighters (01/27/2010) 2010 Schedule

Stig Makes The Move (01/27/2010) Ohlins man heads East

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SemperRide.com is the latest Marine Corps initiative to quell motorcycle mishaps. Following the same theme of "SemperRide" the movie, this will be the cutting edge of motorcycle safety and information. The site will provide many different opportunities and forums to communicate with fellow riders and get information for your riding and training.

..... **Semper Ride TV:** See SemperRide excerpts, the latest PSAs, and interviews by the country's top riders from the Film.

..... **Where to Ride:** Stay updated on Marine Corps track days and other local resources. We have also assembled the best links that will hook you up with the country's best riding spots.

..... **Bikes and PPE:** Still deciding which bike you want? This will be a great resource. Already have a bike? Here you will find out more about it, and what kind of PPE will help keep you safe in the saddle.

..... **Forums:** Whether you ride a Sport bike, Cruiser, Dirt Bike, or use your bike to get to and from work, there will be a place to share your experiences and get help. For all you wrenches out there, we will have a place for you too. Have a close call? Share with fellow Marines so they can learn from your experience.

..... **Marine Corps Info:** Regulations and orders can be tough to navigate and understand. This section will put in plain English what is required by the Marine Corp, and help you find where to go on your base to get more info on training and local requirements.

..... **Events:** Is there a SemperRide event near you? Is your base having a Poker Run or Bike fest? Find it all at SemperRide.com.

..... **Pro Rider Blogs:** Top riders, mechanics, and instructors will share tips and tricks on how to improve your skills.

MOTORCYCLING THE RIGHT WAY



Semperride.com
Coming Online In March 2010

BACK IN THE SADDLE

“Yee Haw”

BY DON BORKOSKI

T

here she sits; your baby. Dusty from the winter storage, but ready to ride! The weather is bound to break any day now. It will be awesome to feel the wind again, to smell the engine when you first fire it up, and to feel the power when you roll on the throttle. Ah yes, the freedom ... You get those butterflies like “spring Christmas!”

BUT READY TO RIDE? MAYBE NOT.

Here are some steps you should take BEFORE that first ride:

- Perform a Pre-Ride Inspection: T-CLOCS your bike
- Service your bike as necessary
- Check your Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Re-familiarize yourself with your bike. Plan a “warm-up ride”

T-CLOCS and Service

TCLOCS is a pre-ride inspection check list developed by the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF). Inspecting your bike prior to each ride is a good idea, but you should thoroughly check it out before the riding season starts.

Some common problems at every seasonal start-up include:

1. Low tire pressure
2. Corroded, worn, or broken cables
3. Dead or weak battery; corroded terminals
4. Burned out light bulbs
5. Expired registration or state inspection
6. Old engine oil (always start the season with new oil)
7. Low radiator fluid (It evaporates from the reservoir)
8. Low, contaminated, or stale fuel
9. Loose or dirty chain or belt
10. Dirty air filter
11. Worn break pads
12. Dust and dirt everywhere (even if you covered it)





T-CLOCS Pre-Ride Inspection	
ITEM	T—TIRES & WHEELS
Front Tire	Tread wear, age cracks
Front Wheel	Spoke tension; rim cracks or dents; wheel bearings (no freeplay, no leaks)
Front Brake	Leaks, wear, cable, bleed valve, hardware
Rear Tire	Tread wear, age cracks
Rear Wheel	Spoke tension; rim cracks or dents; wheel bearings (no freeplay, no leaks)
Rear Brake	Leaks, wear, cable, bleed valve, hardware
ITEM:	C—CONTROLS
Brake Lever	Lever condition, attaching hardware, adjustment knurl
Clutch Lever	Lever condition, attaching hardware, adjustment knurl
Throttle	smooth rotation, full return, freeplay(1/8 inch)
Brake Pedal	Bends, rubber, cable, smooth operation
Shift Lever	Bends, rubber, cable, smooth operation
Handle Bar	Tight, bearings (no freeplay), grip condition
Horn	Installed and operational.
ITEM:	L—LIGHTS
Battery	Terminals, electrolyte level, security
Reflectors	Cracks, hardware
Headlamp	High and low beam, lens cracks, hardware, button
Brake	Light on, bright, lens cracks, hardware
Right Turn Lights	Front and back on, blink, lens cracks, hardware
Left Turn Lights	Front and back on, blink, lens cracks, hardware
License Plate	Light, hardware, registration date
Wiring Harness	Hardware, chafing, routing, condition
ITEM:	O—OIL & OTHER FLUIDS
Fuel	Fluid level, condition, filter check
Engine Oil	Fluid level, condition, service if necessary
Transmission Oil	Fluid level, condition, service if necessary
Drive Shaft	Fluid level, condition, breather hole, service if necessary
Clutch Oil	Fluid level, condition, service if necessary
Radiator Fluid	Reservoir level, condition, service if necessary
Fork Oil	Seal Leaks, proper rebound and compression
Shock Oil	Seal Leaks, proper rebound and compression
Air Filter	Clean or replace
ITEM:	C—CHASSIS
Frame	Look for cracks, peeling paint, corrosion, hardware security
Swingarm	Nut cotter key, free movement, bearing(no freeplay)
Chain/Belt	Cracks; wear; stretch limit; slack 3/4" to 1 1/2", check owner's manual
Sprockets	Wear; security; teeth not hooked, or excessively worn
Fastners	Security; rusted or missing bolts or nuts; cotter keys; safety wire
ITEM:	S—SIDESTAND
Centerstand	Cracks; wear; spring; smooth operation
Sidestand	Cracks; wear; spring; smooth operation

YOUR PPE

Your PPE definitely needs to be checked before the season starts. Depending on how well you stored your gear, you may find some things should just be replaced.

- Your helmet is the first item to check. Did you forget that the face shield was scratched? Or your goggles were broken? Is the helmet liner falling apart from the cold storage? Does it smell a little musty or moldy? (Hint: spray it with Lysol.) You may want to lube the snaps to make them work easier, and darn, the dog chewed the strap! Last but not least, is the helmet shell scratched, cracked or just dirty? Go ahead, wash and wax it before you ride. Automobile rubbing compound can take out some of those smaller scratches. If all else fails, buy a new helmet. It's the closest thing your bike has to an airbag.
- Gloves are also subject to problems you may not know about until you put them on for the first time in the season. Leather can mildew and stretch sections can lose their elasticity. Those holes you put in them last year did not magically go away. Velcro can wear out, and of course that 20 pounds you gained over the holidays may make them a little tighter than you remembered.
- Your jacket and motorcycle pants were probably neglected too. Leather mildews or gets stiff. Wipe it down with a solution of bleach and water (50/50) to clean the gear and kill the mold. Then wipe it down with a heavy coating of Neatsfoot oil to soften it and protect the leather.
- Check other type jackets for tears, holes, zipper operation, missing pads, and if you are obsessive compulsive, you should be able to find the correct liner and make sure it is clean and ready to use.
- Depending on the type of boots you wear, you may have to treat the leather, glue the sole on or get new laces. And why you are at it, polish them. No one will call you a newbie at the beginning of the riding season.
- Finally, break out the rain gear. Remember putting it away wet last summer? If you did and it's all stuck

together, float them in the sink with some dish soap. It will save you from pulling apart dried, previously wet plastic that will rip if you tug on it after a long winter scrunched into a ball. The warm water will also take out some of those wrinkles. Yes, you have to let it dry. Trust me; you'll be happy to have good rain gear in the spring.

FAM Ride

Motorcycle riding is dangerous, even to a seasoned rider. So we must rely on training and experience to stay alive. Not only do we gain valuable life saving experience for every second on the road, but we also gain valuable mistrust of other drivers that share the road with us. It's a healthy self-reliance that keeps our heads on a swivel and out of harm's way. Unfortunately, we have a genetic predisposition to forget pain and remember just the happy thoughts.

Over the winter you lost some of those fears that kept you alive just a few months ago. But don't worry, you will gain them back very quickly once you're on the road, but you have to give yourself the time. Plan familiarization rides at the beginning of the season. Start with a slow, easy ride. Take short trips at first. Ride alone or in very small groups. After a few rides, it will all come back to you.

On those beginning rides, go over the basics in your head. Scrub in your tires on the first ride. Give them time to warm up. Go easy on the brakes. At first, the bike will be heavier than you remembered. You won't trust the traction, and your lean angles won't be so automatic. Your shifting may not be as smooth and you forgot about that touchy throttle. Every bike is different; every one of us "gets it back" at a different rate. You are not alone, so don't let peer pressure push you too fast at the beginning of the season (or ever for that matter). Ride your ride. On a motorcycle, only you can save your own life! There is no stability, no airbags, no seatbelts or steel cage around you. If you crash, you will most likely be ejected. Every fixed object out there is tougher than you. It's true that you can improve your odds of survival by dressing for the crash, but there is something even more foolproof: Don't crash! Get trained; manage your risk and ride defensively if you want to be and old rider like me someday.

DON BORKOSKI IS THE NAVY'S MOTORCYCLE MANAGER AND WORKS AT THE NAVAL SAFETY CENTER.

PREPARATION:

WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD

BY ADC DONALD NUCCIO

It was 0800 on a day last May and it had been raining for more than 24 hours. My race and touring club was finishing up breakfast as I went outside to give my Kawasaki GPX-750 a solid pre-check. As usual, everything checked fine so I went back into the hotel and awaited the captain's safety brief. At approximately 1000, 32 riders saddled up and we rode out on the first leg of the trip back to NAF Atsugi, Japan. It was cold and wet and I was relieved we had made it to the first rest stop for my beloved cup of coffee. My group contained seven riders and we elected to leave after about 15 minutes of rest.

I was fifth in the widely-spaced group entering the on-ramp and I was increasing speed to match that of the traffic on the expressway. As I saw the end of the on-ramp approaching, I was just about to roll on the throttle when I low-sided the bike at about 50 kilometers per hour and the rear of the bike slammed into an embankment.

I could not believe what had just happened. In an instant, my stable platform had been taken out from under me and I had crashed. I walked over to my bike, picked it up, and surveyed the damage. The two riders behind me had also stopped to help. After an extensive look over, I determined most of the damage was cosmetic and I could make it home. I had been lucky. My biggest concern was the missing left foot peg. The only place to rest my left foot now was on the shift lever. It would be very uncomfortable but this plan definitely trumped the idea of calling for a tow. The fairing damage was also significant, but fortunately I was able to keep the wheel from rubbing the rear fender. My riding buddy also stayed behind me and watched for the remainder of the trip home because I had a badly damaged tail light and turn signals.

At the next rest stop, I reflected on the event and spoke with the rider who was behind me. He told me there was nothing obviously incorrect about the way I

was riding and he mentioned we all were in the same turn, going the same speed, and were all riding with proper form. He suspected there may have been oil in the road based on the rate at which the rear tire lost traction and because I laid the bike down in the low part of the incline of the expressway on-ramp.

Several years ago, I laid a bike down for the first time and was scarred badly. I quickly learned the importance of wearing the correct gear and vowed never to be caught unprepared again. My riding pants and jacket are now made of a very durable, thick nylon with pads in the knees, hips, elbows, shoulders, and back.

When I finally made it home this time, I surveyed the damage to my gear. My rain suit was torn up badly and would be unusable in the future. The friction from the road had worn a hole through the left knee of my pants and the right arm of my jacket had a large abrasion and some scratches. Looking back, the only reason I walked away unscratched was due to wearing the correct riding gear. I was dressed for the fall this time.

As a Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) rider coach, I can not stress enough the importance of inspecting your bike before each ride and the benefits of riding with a group. I am fortunate in that the majority of my bike club is older and more experienced than I, and they always know where to race and cruise. They also know exactly where to go for help. While extensive help was not required in this instance, their knowledge and support could have made all the difference. Know your limits, ride with responsible individuals and groups, and always ensure you are dressed for a fall. I might have been more comfortable wearing the legal combination of jeans and a brightly colored long sleeve shirt, but this outfit would have landed me in the doctor's office or worse. Always ride with the correct mindset and resist at all costs the inevitable peer pressure to do the wrong thing. Accidents can and do happen at random times and places. We must always be prepared. ■

ADC Donald Nuccio is attached to the VFA-102 DIAMONDBACKS in Atsugi, Japan and rides with the Ganzl Race and Touring Club based in Fujisawa, Japan. He is the Vice President of the Diamondback Riders, a motorcycle riding club that promotes awareness, training, and safe riding practices for squadron members.

Are You Ready For The Track?

BY STEPHEN RICHARDSON

G

ood question. You've seen the magazines, the glossy pictures of sportbikes leaned over on the edge of the tires, the rider's knee puck skimming over the tarmac, the motorcycle nearly flying ... Could that be you? You know you're a good rider, but are you ready for the next step?

Let's recognize the most important fact about motorcycling: Different people ride different bikes for different reasons and that's what makes our community special. It takes a significant commitment (and a bit of courage) to learn to ride a motorcycle in the first place, and we all share that bond – the passion for the two wheel experience.

So consider the segment of our motorcycle community

that rides sportbikes. If this is you, then you know in your heart that a sportbike wasn't built to run errands to the grocery store or designed for a two week journey across America. (Remember the first time you tried riding on the interstate for over an hour?) The modern sportbike was designed for the racetrack, not a comfy cruise across country. Now if you want to ride your GSXR 1000 across the



country, then great! Find a decent chiropractor and enjoy!

But the question for the rest of the sportbike riders is, what kind of rider are you? Better yet, what kind of rider do you want to be?

If you're going to assess your skills and abilities, it's time to be honest. Brutally honest. Let's start with a quiz.

Stop moaning and take out a #2 pencil.

1. How long have you been riding?
 - a. A couple of months
 - b. A year
 - c. Several years
 - d. Forever
2. How did you choose which bike to buy?
 - a. It had nifty colors
 - b. Your friends all ride that bike. You figured it would be good for you
 - c. You read four bike magazines, trying to research the winner of "the class shoot-out"
 - d. You've owned three (or more) motorcycles. You knew which bike suited you.
3. Does the model name include ...
 - a. The letters FL?
 - b. The letter V or G?
 - c. The letter X or Z in the name?
 - d. The letter R (or SP)?
4. What modifications have you done to your bike?
 - a. Stock (Maybe a few stickers...)
 - b. Polished frame, polished rims, custom paint (including a portrait of some sort), fur seat
 - c. 58 tooth sprocket, full cage, twelve o'clock bar
 - d. Full titanium exhaust, power commander & quick shifter
5. Does your health insurance cover air transportation (Life Flight) to a hospital?
 - a. Not sure (You've been spending so much time researching what kind of exhaust system makes the most horsepower gains for your motorcycle.)
 - b. Really?! This question has nothing to do with the track. If you ride a motorcycle you should know the answer and have the coverage!
6. What kind of gear do you wear?
 - a. Flip flops, cut-offs, a beater and your 'shiny German' chaps, matching vest and lots of decorative pins (Sturgis from 1987!)
 - b. Jeans, leather jacket, full fingered gloves
 - c. Full leathers, gauntlet gloves, boots (You don't like the nylon brush.)
7. What kind of Rider do you want to be?
 - a. A safe rider
 - b. A fast(er) rider
 - c. A rider who can drag a knee
 - d. All of the above

Let's figure out the answers:

To begin with, question #5 is a homework

assignment, so don't score it.

For the remaining six questions:

An "A" is worth 1 point.

A "B" is worth 2 points.

A "C" is worth 3 points.

A "D" is worth 4 points.

Add up your score and let's figure out the meaning of life:

6-8 points; perhaps the track is not the place to go at this time.

9-12 points; a track school can help you become a safer, smoother & more skilled rider.

13-16 points; a track school can help you become a safer, smoother & more skilled rider.

17-20 points; a track school can help you become a safer, smoother & more skilled rider.

21-24 points; What are you waiting for?

Of course, the quiz is not the answer. Knowing yourself and the kind of rider you are (or want to be) is never that easy. Often times our self-assessment is not as honest as it needs to be when it comes to riding. That's where the track is indispensable as a tool to help riders assess themselves and learn the finer points of sportbike riding. Or unlearn the bad habits developed after years of trying to figure it out on our own.

Going to the track can be an amazing and rewarding experience, but it represents a commitment to a new level of riding. To start off right, take a track school. There's no way to sugarcoat the fact that your first track experience is likely to be stressful and intense. The way to experience this level of riding is within a controlled environment, and track schools offer the structure and pace that allow a (nearly) stress-free experience. There are some track day providers that will allow a "taste of the track," designed to give you a brief ride around the circuit accompanied by a short classroom session, but in the end you will want to take a school for your first track experience.

Yes, there is a cost consideration, but if you're going to spend \$1000 or more on a complete exhaust system, plus a Power Commander, certainly you can try to scrape together the money to go out and improve your skills. Do you really need to justify investing financially in your skill development?

Another way to consider the budget issue: The cost associated with a reckless driving ticket is equal to most basic track schools.

So where can you go to a track school? Easy, go to RoadracingWorld.com, look on the left side of the page and scroll down until you see the "Trackday Directory" listed. That publication lists all the track schools and track day providers for the United States. You can order the directory online or buy it from a newsstand.

Most schools are a one-day affair. You bring your own bike and gear. Higher-end schools may rent gear/leathers. It's worth the additional cost as you can try out leath-

The way to experience this level of riding is within a controlled environment, and track schools offer the structure and pace that allow a (nearly) stress-free experience.

ers and get an idea of what to buy later. Deluxe schools can last two or three days, plus provide bikes and gear.

Getting your motorcycle ready for the track may seem intimidating, but there are only four areas of consideration:

- Lights & mirrors. Tape over the lights, remove the mirrors.
- Coolant. Drain (and flush once), fill with distilled water.
- Oil. Some schools only require a dab of silicone sealant for the oil fill, drain & filter. But getting the fill cap and drain plug safety wired (plus a hose clamp and safety wire for the filter) is best. Any motorcycle shop can do it for a nominal fee.
- Tires. Get a new set, and they do NOT have to be race tires. In fact, most sportbike street tires are perfect for a track school. They operate well under a wider range of temperatures and surface conditions.

Check with the school for gear requirements. Leathers are usually mandated (two-piece leathers are okay if they zip all the way around), plus gauntlet style gloves and boots that come up at least eight inches. Your full-face helmet should be free of damage and not be more than five years old.

Final considerations are the logistics for travel to and from the track. Plan to transport your bike on a trailer, truck or van rather than riding to and from the venue. That way you won't have to prepare your street bike for the track when you arrive.

Also think about staying at a local hotel the night before your track school to ensure you're well rested. Lastly, don't forget snacks and fluids. Drink lots of water! Be ready for an intense physical and mental workout.

Of course, don't forget the most important part: Have fun! For sportbike riders, it really doesn't get better than this. ■

STEPHEN RICHARDSON IS AN MSF RIDER COACH AND RACES WITH THE CCS.



Learning From the Best...



BY APRIL PHILLIPS

There may be no place where mentoring is more important than the motorcycling community. Most of us learned to ride a motorcycle from a friend, family member, or by taking a motorcycle safety course with an experienced MSF RiderCoach when we first started out.

But, at what point do we stop relying on the mentors and become one? What qualifies someone to be the voice of experience?

Recently, Lisa Johnson, a motorcycle safety expert at the Naval Safety Center, had the opportunity to meet one of the best mentors in the sportbike world, Kevin Schwantz. Sure he's a world champion road racer, but what really makes Schwantz special is his ability to mentor sportbike riders and racers at all levels.

Johnson met Schwantz while attending one of his weekend track schools. She was impressed with his personal involvement with the course and the fact that he participated in the whole event – even riding on the track with the students.

“Kevin started the first day off by helping those of us who flew in for the class choose and fit leathers, boots, gloves and helmets. He immediately made us feel at ease while undoubtedly sizing up our experience and anxiety levels at the same time,” Johnson said.

Even when two of Johnson's classmates had incidents requiring the track sessions to be stopped, Schwantz took the time to step in and speak with everyone about what had happened and what could be learned from the moment. Over the entire two-day course, he was there with a smile or a coaching tip at just the right moment.

“It was clear to me that his reputation as a mentor of promising young racers was well-deserved, and it obviously carried over to the operation of his track school,” she said.

But you don't become a mentor overnight. It takes a lot of experience and miles under your belt.

Schwantz was learning to ride about the same time he began to walk. The Houston, Texas, native grew up around his parents' Yamaha motorcycle shop and there's no doubt that racing was in his blood. Although his father





was a competitive trials rider and Schwantz has ridden just about everything on two wheels, he learned a lot about racing the hard way. Don't believe him? Just check out the scars and the broken bones that never mended quite as straight as they started out.

In his teens, he worked his way up to becoming one of the top regional motocross racers before a serious crash made him decide that motocross racing was not the direction to go. Some friends convinced him to try road racing.

"I thought, no jumps, no dirt, no mud? How can this be any fun?" Schwantz said. "But after an hour, I was as fast as my buddies who'd been racing forever."

And fast is fun.

Especially when you're good at it.

In 1984, he was signed by the Suzuki Yoshimura Superbike team and began winning races. But he didn't win championships. There were crashes and broken bones that took him out of championship contention. When he was "on," Schwantz won races and set track records. He raced all over the country in the AMA before being promoted to the world stage, racing for Suzuki in the 500cc Grand Prix series. By this time, Schwantz had a reputation for a "win it or bin it" mentality, and it wasn't until 1993 that he finally won the 500cc World Championship.

"I had always been fast," he said. "But I lacked consistency."

Things improved when he got to the Suzuki Grand Prix team and everything started to click.

"It took the chief technician really explaining the motorcycle to me. That understanding helped my consistency," Schwantz said.

When he walked away from the sport in 1995, he knew a lot more than he did when he started out and he wanted to share that knowledge with young riders coming up in the sport. He started the Schwantz School with the goal of creating confident, safer riders who can learn from some of his mistakes and his scars.



Enter Blake Young.

He's a 22-year-old rider who grew up near Madison, Wisc. Like Schwantz, he started riding at the age of four, and by 16, he turned pro. When Schwantz and Blake got together, there was instant chemistry. Already a teacher, Schwantz knew he wanted to help Young make it to the top of the sport and the younger rider said he's learned a lot from having Schwantz in his corner.

"Working with him is awesome. Having him as a friend is even better," Young said. "I can ask him anything, personal or professional, and he's walked in the footsteps I want to take."

The Navy and Marine Corps push young motorcyclists to find older, more experienced mentors to help them learn to become better riders. Many reject the idea, and Schwantz said although he doesn't agree, he understands the mentality.

"Motorcycle racing is mano y mano. It's me against the other guy. It's an art form when it's done right, but if the rider isn't 110 percent focused with confidence in his ability, it can be a long weekend," he said.

He now realizes that there are people he wished he'd listened to as a young rider.



"I wish I'd paid more attention to the mental and physical preparation, and making sure I don't let the same section of racetrack give me the same grief it did the year before. I tried to skin the cat the same way each time and it didn't work."



Now that Schwantz is acting as an extra set of eyes for his students, he knows that there are things that can only be seen from the outside and reasons to listen to others who have been there, done that.

But his relationship with Young goes far beyond teacher-student. They are truly friends – practically family members – and that has deepened the mentoring bond. Both men understand the drive to go faster, to race harder, to win championships. This is why Young knows Schwantz's advice is sound. It also makes Schwantz careful about the direction he offers.

"As a teacher and mentor, the crashes hurt more, even though it's not me crashing," he said. "You really feel responsible."

Because Young is who he is, an AMA Suzuki Factory Superbike racer, he's never going to be the type of rider who plays it too safe. He wouldn't be an up-and-coming



star if he was. He's had his share of crashes and even lost the tip of his pinky finger in a crash a year ago. But he's taken Schwantz's advice to heart and he makes sure he's thought everything through.

"It's a balance," Young said. "The faster I go, the better, but there's always going to be risk. In racing, the risk is high and you have to know that. I know every rail, every wall, every part of the track. It's there in the back of my mind on



every turn of every lap. You have to be aware of it."

While most Sailors and Marines won't find retired champions with their own motorcycle riding schools to be their mentors, Schwantz said everyone benefits from mentorship relationships. What has he learned? Responsibility, and a different mindset about riding.

"Every ride is great. Today's is as good as it gets but tomorrow's might be even better. And I don't want to do anything that's going to cause me to miss it."

That's the whole point of mentorship within the motorcycle community – sticking around so you can enjoy the next ride and gaining the experience that will allow you to mentor the next generation.

For more information on mentoring, contact your command's motorcycle club or your regional safety office. To learn more about Kevin Schwantz and his riding school, visit www.schwantzschool.com. ■

Fatigue and Motorcycle Touring



BY DON ARTHUR, M.D.

A

s the sun sets and the miles pass, fatigue becomes our shadow but never our friend. The pleasures of a ride can melt into frustration if a rider pushes the day's miles beyond his or her abilities.

SLEEP

Our brains are complex organs that run at full speed during waking hours. They require a cooling down period which happens as we sleep. Each individual requires a specific, genetically set, amount of sleep. Most people require about eight hours, but the normal range is somewhere between six and 10 hours. Your sleeping pattern is called your Circadian Rhythm. Each person is programmed with his or her own rhythm. This internal clock tries to keep us on a normal 24-hour sleep rhythm and is usually synchronized to light (day) and dark (night) cycles. Disruptions of our normal cycle confuse our brain and fatigue may set in when it is interrupted or changed. Sleeping less than your personal need

eventually results in a sleep debt which must be repaid to return the brain to baseline function. The good news is that the debt does not have to be paid in full hour-for-hour, but it must eventually be paid by obtaining deep sleep, not multiple short naps.

Unfortunately, you cannot bank sleep!

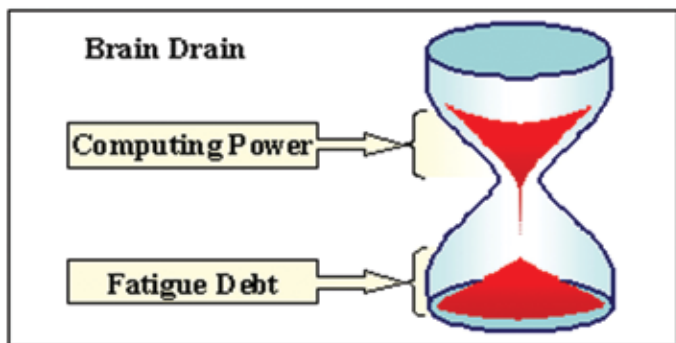
DRONE EFFECT

During repetitive or mundane activities, our internal clock may lose track of time. This also disturbs our circadian rhythm and individuals may become momentarily functionally incapacitated, also known as microsleeps. These periods manifest as a few seconds

of open-eyed sleep, paralysis, blurred vision, or other effects of which the victim might be unaware except for a vague feeling of having missed something. We have all experienced this effect while driving or riding and must be on guard for it when traveling long distances.

FATIGUE EFFECTS

Our brains are marvelous computers, but they grow weary of constant activity and must be refreshed, which we do through sleep, naps or rest. Much like an hourglass, our mental processing power slowly ebbs as the fatigue



debt increases. You already multi-task more while riding than you do driving, so on a motorcycle the effect is more pronounced. With limited computing power, any challenges you encounter will not be easy for your brain to react to properly.

As our computing power and speed decrease when fatigued, our ability to gain and process new information becomes impaired. In general, less experienced riders are at greater risk when tired because skills are not honed to automatically respond to unexpected situations. As fatigue

increases, so does your risk level. A lack of sleep becomes an increasingly prominent focus, both consciously and subconsciously; eyes get heavy, gaze becomes unfocused and you do not easily identify hazards or risks. If you are here: sleep!

PREPARATION

There are several things you can do to prepare for a ride when you expect less sleep than normal:

- Get proper nourishment
- Do not over eat
- Begin rested
- Avoid sugars
- Exercise regularly
- Prepare ahead of time

Although you can't bank sleep, starting out rested means your "hour glass is reset" and you begin your ride at peak performance. Proper nourishment means eating

PREPARING YOUR RIDE

Personal gear

- Comfortable riding suit, boots, gloves
- Properly fitting helmet
- Waterproofing
- Heating and cooling aids
- Skin and lip hydration and sun protection

Ergonomics – your bike must fit you

- Properly fitted and comfortable seat
- Comfortable riding position
- Convenient foot peg and control locations
- Mirrors correctly located
- Windshield

Packing

- Put things in the same place every time
- Put frequently used items on top
- Take only what's necessary
- Be able to find everything in the dark

Repair kits

- Take the tools you'll need
- Pack a tire repair kit and means of inflation
- Know how to use them!
- Towing service

Communication – your link with others

- CB or FRS radios
- Cell phones – for when you're stopped
- Phone card for emergencies



a light meal that is NOT heavy in fat, sugar or caffeine because those foods, or too much of any food, takes a lot of energy to process. Once you have processed all that food, your body crashes and you become very tired. Not a good way to start a ride.

Your motorcycle should be configured to maximize your comfort and decrease the work of riding. Make sure you have a routine and all your equipment is thoroughly road tested. Your bike should fit you, not vice versa.

Here are some important aspects of ride preparation: Alcohol should be avoided for several days prior to a ride. The toxic products of alcohol metabolism adversely affect brain activity long after the noticeable effects have disappeared.

The Ride

There are many aspects of the actual ride which can affect the accumulation of fatigue debt. The more challenging the ride, the more fatiguing it will be. Some riding factors which most quickly produce fatigue are:

- Riding conditions beyond the rider's ability
- Increased threats – wildlife and traffic
- Excessive heat or cold
- Time constraints
- Bad weather
- Unfamiliar roads
- Monotonous scenery
- Extended night riding
- Distractions – physical and mental
- Complex tasks required while riding

Effective Resting

There is no substitute for sleep! Repetitive sleep deprivation also has a cumulative effect. Don't let it catch up with you while you are riding!

If you are riding cross country and you need to nap, take at least two hours of continuous sleep which will complete a sleep cycle. Make sure you find a comfortable location which will allow uninterrupted sleep with

SYMPTOMS OF FATIGUE WHILE RIDING

Slow reaction time

- Braking hard to avoid a hazard
- Spilling drinks

Reduced awareness/vigilance

- Driving slower than normal
- Being surprised by a passing car
- Tailgating
- Not seeing deer or other road hazards

Impaired memory

- Passing a gas stop when low on fuel
- Forgetting your wallet after fueling
- Forgetting your spouse's birthday call

Impaired decision-making

- Not stopping to rest when tired
- Taking an inappropriate route
- Inability to choose from a diner menu

Loss of situational awareness

- Failing to recognize a stop sign or signal
- Not putting the kickstand down
- Failing to put feet down when stopping
- Stopping in a high gear
- Failing to 'go' when light changes
- Inserting eye drops while wearing glasses

Performance decrement

- Inability to calculate purchase amounts
- Inability to formulate routing plans
- Failing to communicate with riding buddies
- Fixating on a task



minimal external interruption.

If you are just resting from the ride, you need at least 15 minutes of down time to meaningfully lessen fatigue. That down time should include getting the blood pumping by walking around, and drinking water or other non-sugar, non-caffeinated beverages.

No one thinks about fatigue when they ride until the butt gets sore, or the eyes start to droop. Give it some thought and you'll enjoy the ride much better on the next trip. ■

DON ARTHUR IS A FORMER SURGEON GENERAL OF THE NAVY AND AN AVID MOTORCYCLIST.

Shocking Truth About Suspension



"I bought the bike new, isn't the suspension set up correctly already?"

"The suspension on my bike needs to be broken-in, it hardly moves."

"My bike is old, that's why it bounces so much."

"You don't need shocks. They are only there for comfort."

"NO, NO AND NO!!!"

BY DYLAN CODE

M

ost people are in the dark as to the basic purpose of suspension, and yes, it has a purpose much more important than to provide a comfortable ride. The most important job of a motorcycle's suspension is to keep the tires in contact with the road, especially if the surface is less than perfect, or if the bike is at extreme lean angles. Your suspension is constantly working to maintain traction. Having a good set of tires is not enough; the suspension must also be in good condition and properly adjusted for optimum tire contact with the surface. So how does your suspension do that?

First let's go back to the early days of bikes. Back then, the simplest form of suspension was a springs. A spring is an energy storage device. That means you hit a bump, the energy is absorbed and temporarily stored by the spring. But springs continually try to return to their neutral position, so that stored energy is released again and again passed the neutral position until the last of the energy is gone. The result is a bouncy ride. Not the best system, but a good start, and far better than nothing.

As technology advanced, hydraulic damping was added to help the spring dissipate excess energy as it returned to neutral, so it didn't bounce. We know that system as a shock absorber, or shock. Hydraulic damping is accomplished with either a damping rod or a cartridge with a piston and oil in it. The damper's job is to slow or restrict movements of the spring for a more controlled compression and release of the energy to and from the spring. On older bikes and many of the larger motorcycles, there is no adjustment to the suspension. The shock has a spring and hydraulic dampening designed for the weight of the motorcycle and average rider. But today's motorcycles are dramatically affected by riders' weight, horsepower output, and riding style. One shock will not fit all. And in some cases, like sport bikes, one shock is not good for all riders on the same bike. For example, suspension good for a heavy rider could be unbearable, or even dangerous, for a light rider. To solve this problem, many modern motorcycles have three main adjustments you can make to the front forks and rear shock(s) to suit your weight and riding style.



THOSE ADJUSTMENTS ARE:

Spring tension, also known as spring preload or sag.

This refers to how firm or soft the spring is. The reason some call it "sag" is because you measure the spring tension by having the rider get on the bike, straight up and down, while stationary, and see how much the suspension sags under the rider and bike's combined weight. To measure, you must use two fixed points on the bike. Most modern motorcycles allow you to adjust this. In some cases the actual spring may have to be changed to a stronger or weaker one.

Compression damping.

This refers to how quickly or slowly the hydraulic dampener allows the shock to compress. Not enough compression damping allows the shock to bottom out easily. Too much compression damping gives a harsh ride--the rider ends up feeling the road too much. Again most motorcycles, especially sport bikes, allow you to adjust this.

Rebound damping.

This refers to how quickly or slowly the shock returns, or re-extends after hitting a bump. Too much rebound hydraulic damping never allows the shock to return to its normal state because it returns too slowly after you hit a bump. This gives a progressively harsher ride as you go over a series of bumps. Not enough rebound damping allows the shock to return too quickly; this makes the bike bounce back after hitting a bump, some call it a pogo effect. This too is adjustable on most modern bikes.

No damping adjustment.

On motorcycles without a damping adjustment, it is important to change the shock oil regularly. The oil viscosity (thickness) changes over time and can affect damping. There are also different oil weights for your shock that can be substituted to change the damping effect if you are too light or too heavy for the designed parameters. Discuss these changes with a professional mechanic.



Where To Start On Your Bike:

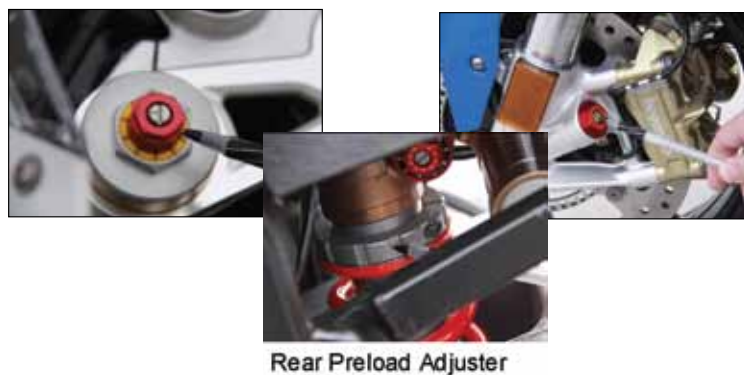
The first, and arguably most important, suspension adjustment that you would want to get correct is sag, your spring tension. Basically we want the suspension sagging, or compressing the right amount when the rider sits on the bike. As a rule of thumb, you want the forks and rear shock to sag down about one-third of their overall travel with the rider sitting on the bike, bike straight up and down, feet on the pegs and bike off of the side stand. This is the optimal position for your shock to either extend or compress depending on the road irregularity you may hit like a rock or a hole.

To give you an idea, most sport bikes have about five inches of total travel front and rear. That's about 127 millimeters. Therefore, you would want the bike plus rider to make the suspension sag about 40 millimeters (one-third). There is leeway on this figure, but for a motorcycle with five inches of total travel, only 20 millimeters of sag would be too hard and 55 millimeters would be too soft. To measure sag (if you are the rider), you need two friends to help you.

1. Have someone hold the bike upright with you on it (without pushing down or up on the bike).
2. Have another friend make the measurement on both the front and rear compressed shocks.
3. Take these same measurements with you off of the bike using the same measurement points.
4. Subtract the measurement with you off the bike from the measurement with you on the bike. This difference is the sag.
5. Repeat the process after adjusting the spring tension until it is around 40 mm's. It's best to adjust front forks and back shock(s) separately.
6. When adjusting the front shocks, you only need to measure one fork, but it is important to keep the adjustments matched. If you add two turns to the right fork, add the same two turns to the left fork.

If the bike sags too much, you must add spring tension. This is also called preloading the spring. Your bike's manual will show you where that adjustment is and what tools to use. Adjusting preload on the forks is usually far more accessible than the rear. The rear shock often

requires a special spanner wrench or rounded tip screwdriver to move a stepped or notched adjustment ring. For most bikes, one turn of the fork preload adjuster usually changes the sag by one millimeter. There are various types of rear preload adjusters, but for the type with a threaded collar adjuster (most common type) one full turn will commonly change the sag by about 3 millimeters.



Rear Preload Adjuster

What's next?

Once you have the spring preload, or sag adjusted, it's time to adjust rebound damping and lastly the compression damping. Rebound dampening is usually adjusted by a screw adjuster on the top of the shock or fork. Compression damping is usually adjusted by a similar screw adjuster on the bottom of the shock or fork. (Some forks are installed flipped around, so the adjustment for compression and rebound are reversed. See your owner's manual to identify the correct adjustment screws.) It would be fair to say that there are many books of data written on the science of properly adjusting a motorcycle's suspension. Rather than short change you in this article, watching an on-line video will provide you with a visual on how to adjust your shocks.

One quick video resource is: <http://www.superbike-school.com/multi-media/machinery-videos.php>. You can also search YouTube. For more comprehensive suspension setup information, go to an expert like Dave Moss. His website is <http://www.feelthetrack.com/>.

A properly set up suspension can make a night and day difference in performance, feel, and the level of safety from your motorcycle. Take your bike to a pro or educate yourself on the adjustments and how they affect the traction and handling of your particular bike. You'll not only have a better performing and safer riding machine, but you will also have a bike that feels more comfortable and gives you confidence on the road because of the vastly improved traction. This is the cheapest fix you can do to your bike to squeeze out the most performance. Take the time and do it. ■

DYLAN CODE IS GENERAL MANAGER OF THE CALIFORNIA SUPERBIKE SCHOOL

OH YEAH! Pimp My Ride...

You may have a cool ride but don't let it and you become a hood ornament.



BY DON BORKOSKI

We're all guilty! Riders drop thousands of dollars to buy the perfect bike and what's the first thing we do? Modify it. That's right. It was almost perfect, but we had to have: new pipes, chrome, extended swing arms, tail kits, LED lights, lift kits, lowering kits, floor boards, new tires, paint job, new handlebars, new grips, add passenger seat, remove passenger seat, add a tachometer, need a power monitor, new shock springs, etc. ... Almost every motorcycle on the road has had something added, removed or modified from the original condition.

So, what's wrong with that? Well, nothing and everything.

Things we modify on our motorcycles fall into three categories: Accessories/Cosmetic, Power, and Geometry changes. These changes may be harmless, but in some cases they dramatically change our perfectly engineered

machine into a deadly monster unless we are aware of the consequences of each modification.

Accessories/Cosmetic Changes

You might think changing the look of your motorcycle isn't a big deal, but there are some things you should consider before you make those changes. For example, if you black out your bike and minimize the lighting with LED miniatures, the bike may be the baddest thing on the road, but can other drivers see you? Especially at night? Drivers on the road can't see us as it is!

The more you lessen the visibility of your motorcycle, the more defensively you need to ride. After all, you have made yourself invisible. You may have a cool ride, but don't let it and you become a hood ornament. Consider brighter riding gear or reflective material over your garb. Better yet, judiciously lower your bike's visibility; be cool,

but not stealthy. Of course being stealthy is the point. We get it! Just don't let it kill you.

Other cosmetic changes include removing the cowling which will reduce the aerodynamics and can reduce the engine cooling. Removing the windscreen takes away some protection and ride comfort. Some riders change the mirrors or light positions. Just keep in mind that some accessories are safety equipment required by law for a reason. They may save your life.

Power Train Changes

You got a HOG® for cruising right? Or maybe you own a GSXR for speed and the twisties? Modern motorcycles are engineering marvels for engine performance, but we are driven! That 160 horsepower on a 390 pound frame isn't enough. Or the acceleration to 60mph in four seconds is just a little slow. Here is where we drop some serious coin. We buy racing cams, power commanders, performance exhaust, Dyno adjustments, high-flow air filters, gas flow heads, turbo blowers, Nitrous. Some modifications come prepackaged in kits, like stages 1, 2 or 3. The market is there to squeeze the horsepower out of that engine, and of course, to squeeze the money out of your wallet.

We all want more power. But again, what are the consequences? Can you live with the consequences? Some modifications can void the warranty on the engine and transmission. Performance exhaust systems make your bike louder. The drive train may not be strong enough. You

will be buying tires more often, especially the rear tire.

Your state may not allow your modified bike on the road because of noise or emissions. Don't find out when you get that ticket giving you 30 days to fix your bike or get it off the road. The throttle may be too touchy. Your engine may overheat without aux cooling, and more.



Bottom line, before you squeeze the extra horse power out of your motorcycle, ask a professional if the modifications can be done separately or if there is something else you should be doing as a package deal. In most cases you may have to re-map your fuel injectors and that often requires some type of power commander. Ask yourself if you need the power, or if it will contribute to your collection of speeding violations. Do you have the self control to "live" with the extra power, or is it too tempting and dangerous for you? If you pop that nitrous bottle, do you have a few thousand dollars ready to repair the blown head, stretched chain, or to replace those burnt valves?

One more concern to consider—with power comes speed, and with speed you better have brakes that can slow you down. In some cases the motorcycle has more than adequate brakes. In others you may have to install softer pads for better braking, but with a shorter wear life. In other cases you may have to change the brake calipers completely.

Last but not least, repositioning controls can be either beneficial or dangerous. Heal toe shifter, MotoGP shifters, throttle locks, extended brake pedals, and electronic shifters are all viable motorcycle modifications that some riders would not do without. But is it for you? Or will it make you more dangerous on your bike? The best way to find out if you will like the changes would be to try them on someone's bike that already has the modification.

Geometry Changes

Probably the most dramatic and dangerous changes you can make to your motorcycle are geometry changes. You motorcycle is engineered to balance handling characteristics for that style of motorcycle. These design features include the wheel base, center of gravity, and ergonomics for the rider, ground clearance, seat height, tire width and diameter, handlebar height and distance from the seat, suspension travel, distance from the ground, foot peg location, etc.

Each feature affects different handling characteristics of the bike.

Some of these features are easy to change and can dramatically limit or improve what your bike can do. Keep in mind that there is give and take with change to the motorcycle's design. Below are some common modifications and the effects they have on the bike:

- Lowering kits: Improves aerodynamics, and coolness. Reduces ground-clearance (sometime dangerously) and limits turning radius.
- Extended swing arm: Improves handling at speed in a straight line. Reduces turning radius and rear shock effectiveness.

- Extended fork: Improves straight line handling. Reduces turning radius and rear shock effectiveness.

- Extended handlebars: May improve rider comfort, and leverage to turn a heavy front tire. Increases the distance required to move the wheel to make a turn.

- Wider tires: Improves traction, reduces agility

- Stiffer suspension: Generally improves traction (if not too stiff). Reduces ability to dampen road feel/comfort.

- Weaker suspension: Improves road feel/comfort (if not too weak). Can reduce traction.

- Repositioned foot controls: Non-sportbikes often offer mid or forward foot controls. They can change the rider's comfort, ability to reach the ground, or change ground clearance. Some riders find it difficult to ride using forward controls.

- Sliders: Sliders for sportbikes are a must. With cowlings costing in excess of \$3,000, they may save your cover from a low speed slide or inadvertent drop.

- Engine savers, Crash cage, Roll bars: These are modifications that should be considered to protect your engine or cowlings. They reduce aerodynamics, but in many cases it's worth it.

Remember that looks aren't everything. Changes you make to the geometric configuration of your motorcycle can dramatically, and maybe dangerously, change the handling characteristics of the bike. If you purchase a used bike, look for changes the previous owners may have made. Can you live with those changes? If not have the dealer put it back to original condition.

Don't let the cool factor kill you. Riding a motorcycle is probably one of the most dangerous activities you will do in your lifetime. Know how your bike handles and how much power and stopping ability it has. Know how changes have improved or restricted its performance. Improve your bikes visibility by riding it where you can be seen and where you have escape routes from traffic on the road. If you purchase a new bike, or modify an old one, take a motorcycle course to feel it out. You can sign up for Navy courses around the world on the web site: www.navymotorcyclerider.com.

Hopefully this will provide you with some food for thought before buying or modifying your motorcycle. Some of the cool changes you make are no longer cool if you wreck, ruin your bike, or invalidate the warrantee. Sometimes it is cheaper to just buy a different bike to do what you want it to do. Good luck and ride smart. ■



Each feature affects different handling characteristics of the bike.



BY EMILY DAVENPORT

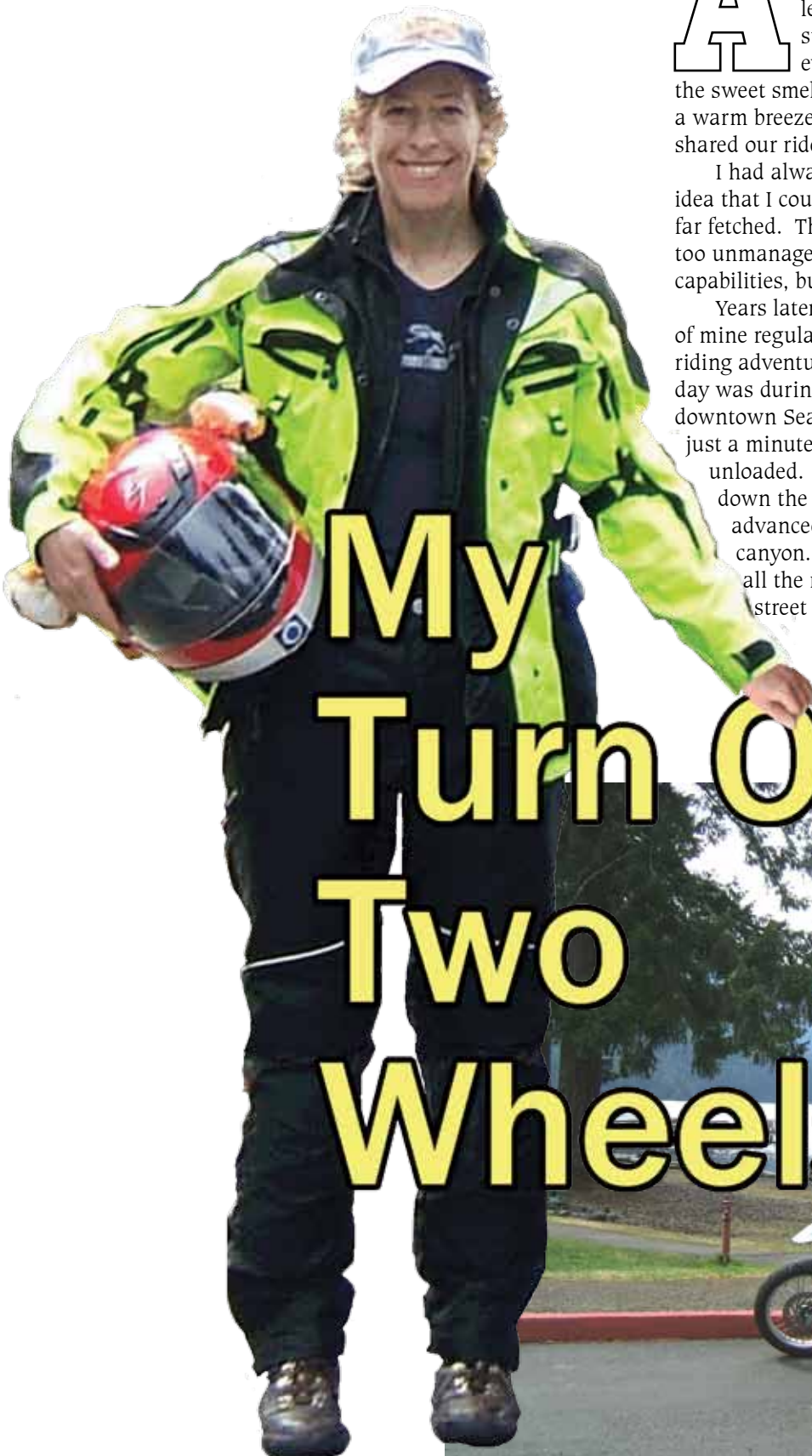
As a little kid I always enjoyed riding on the back of Dad's motorcycle. I loved the effortless motion of zooming along the residential streets of west Houston, faster than I could ever peddle my little Schwinn. Unenclosed, the sweet smell of mimosa trees filled my nostrils, and a warm breeze hugged me as I hugged Dad's waist. We shared our rides together a like secret adventure.

I had always enjoyed riding on the back, but the idea that I could operate a motorcycle myself seemed too far fetched. They were way too big, too heavy, certainly too unmanageable, and too dangerous. I doubted my capabilities, but the interest never went away.

Years later, the interest was renewed. A close friend of mine regularly regaled me with stories of his weekend riding adventures, and I realized my favorite part of the day was during my morning commute to the office in downtown Seattle. My bus typically arrived at my stop just a minute or two before the Bainbridge Island ferry unloaded. I would stop on the sidewalk and look down the steep hill as numerous solitary headlights advanced with a growing rumble up the urban canyon. I was a little kid again, excitedly watching all the motorcycle commuters roar past me up the street on their way to work.

However, being older, along with the interest came the awareness of the dangers of riding, and much to my chagrin, I

My Turn On Two Wheels



became a nervous passenger. I finally decided to take the MSF Basic Rider course, thinking it would make me a more comfortable passenger. The course was fantastic and a ton of fun. To my surprise, I walked away deciding, "To heck with being a passenger, I want to ride!"

By the time I narrowed my search to the exact bike I wanted, it was early May, the weather was gorgeous, and motorcycles were selling like hotcakes. After looking as far away as Eugene, Oregon, I lucked into a deal on a silvery-blue BMW in Portland. Not having ridden more than 10 blocks on real streets, I rented a truck and transported my new bike back to Seattle, where I met a friend at a loading dock less than a mile from my house. Giving strict instructions to stay right behind me, and direct traffic around me should I stall at the stop sign at the top of the hill, I suited up and climbed on my new bike. I rode to the first intersection where I waited for the light to change, when a Yamaha rider rode past nodding acknowledgment in my direction. I'm in! I thought. I had been on my bike a total of 10 minutes and had already been accepted into the brotherhood of motorcyclists!

Over the next several weeks I practiced my cornering, quick stops (the rear ABS kicked in right away), and figure-eights in the nearest parking lot, read David Hought's *Proficient Motorcycling*, and slowly ventured out onto residential streets. Before long, aimless wandering began to bother my environmentally-minded conscience, and I began using my Givi hard cases for grocery shopping. The 52+ m.p.g. in-city gas consumption made me feel greener

than ever (and happier financially, as well.) I outfitted myself with all the proper riding gear at gear swaps, while gobbling down brisket sandwiches and making new friends. I kept a diary of my early progress with such accomplishments as "first time fueling up," "first ride with side bags" (extra weight), "getting more comfortable at 30 m.p.h.," and, "got bike up on center stand!"

Then I tackled a whole list of firsts with a day trip to nearby Bainbridge Island: first trip out of town, first time on a Washington State ferry, first crossing of an elevated bridge with side winds, and first time on a gravel road (by mistake.) I had another unexpected first when I pulled off the road into a sloping, gravel parking lot (also a mistake.) After a nerve-wracking 15-minutes of navigating the parking lot, including hopping off the bike in a spot where I discovered I couldn't park it and couldn't get back on to move it, I nearly accomplished another first – dropping the bike.

Still undeterred, and having survived that day, I decided to expand my horizons a couple weeks later with an overnight trip to the Puget Sound town of Port Townsend. It was only a couple hours' drive away, but pushed me up to speeds of 55-60 mph on two-lane highways with longer riding times. It also involved crossing the Hood Canal Bridge – a floating concrete bridge with three sections of grated bridge deck. Though I had crossed grated bridge decks before, I was apprehensive of this bridge with longer spans and more lanes of traffic at greater speeds. I approached the bridge with racing heart,

just hoping to survive, and discovered after the first span that it was a piece of cake. As I left the final span and landed on solid asphalt again, I wanted to throw up my fist in triumphant jubilation – I'd done it!

My father had suggested for fun that I dress up my helmet with a pair of suction cup tiger ears, saying he thought they'd help attract attention. And that they did. You have to be a bit of an extrovert to wear tiger ears and a tail, so with a deep breath and a "here goes nothin'" sigh, I slapped them on my helmet upon arriving in town. With a bright fluorescent yellow jacket and my ears and tail, I attracted more than my share of attention





as I rode around the little Victorian waterfront town.

At the farmer's market the next day a woman slapped me on the back and said, "You're the woman we saw last night!" One woman left her friends and walked across a busy street to come tell me how much she liked my getup. And a man in the lobby of my hotel turned around to see me in my jacket and announced loudly, "We've seen you *three* times now!" I had discovered a cheap and easy way to win friends, and began having a lot of fun with such an easy ice breaker.

Of course, the bike itself attracted attention, too. As I stood beside it, clambering into or out of my riding gear, men would walk past and quietly compliment, "Nice bike." I was pleased with my limited mechanical knowledge to at least be able to respond to questions of how much it weighed, how many cylinders it had, etc. But the most gratifying thing for me was when women would approach to ask about the bike. One woman hesitatingly approached me with her 11-year old daughter in tow and shyly asked, "How do you like that bike?" She let me know she'd been thinking of riding for a while, and I unloaded the story of how I'd gotten into it, giving her all the information I had about bikes and riding courses as her daughter furiously scribbled down notes. She literally walked away taller, filled with more confidence and spirit.

I made friends of all ages, from men in their 60s who harkened back to their riding days before they got married, to 5 and 6-year-olds who stood frozen in their tracks, staring with fascination. Like no other sport I've ever done, motorcycling has opened up more doors and

introduced me to more genuinely friendly people than I could've hoped to encounter, and I was sorry I hadn't gotten into it sooner.

And I've come to regard it as a sport, complete with all the specialized equipment and opportunities galore for any gear hound. Somehow it reminds me of skiing. Making a smooth turn, leaning into it, trusting and feeling the tires grab the pavement is much like carving out a nice turn in snow, riding the edges where the movement is effortless and graceful, and the results beautiful. In both cases the body is leaned over in such a way as to defy gravity, yet still in motion, and results in that euphoric sense of flying.

As the summer progressed, so did my riding skills, as I tackled interstate driving, camping trips, and a full day dirt bike class to help me with those gravel roads. I found a hair style that worked well under a helmet, downsized all personal items to fit in a motorcycle jacket, and had motorcycle magazines littering my bathroom floor, while my car increasingly sat neglected in my driveway.

It was at the end of Labor Day weekend when I was returning to town after a four-day camping trip that I got stopped in traffic at a train crossing. I noticed in the back seat of the SUV next to me a little girl craning forward in her booster seat, grinning and waving enthusiastically. I gave a gloved wave back, as her father rolled down his window, and with a shrug announced, "She just loves motorcycles."

"That's totally understandable," I replied. ■

EMILY DAVENPORT IS THE DAUGHTER OF CAPT. NICHOLAS DAVENPORT, THE AEROMEDICAL DIVISION HEAD AT THE NAVAL SAFETY CENTER.

**REVOLUTIONIZING
MOTORCYCLE SAFETY**

WELCOME TO THE FUTURE!

**BY: ABHC(AW/SW) JOHN MABRY
WITH AS1(AW/SW) JASON BLOCK**



It all started on a blisteringly hot and humid day in June 2004. On 5.4km of unadulterated, throttle breaking, rev-limiter maxing, fear inducing, but nicely-controlled heaven, sat a sweet little race-track in beautiful Siracusa, Sicily. I was sweating, out of breath, and having the time of my life. I had just come off the racetrack after my third 25-minute session, riding as fast as my limited talent allowed.

As I drank water and tried to cool off, my friends and I talked about how much fun we were having, while learning new things too. We said it would be awesome to hold the annual motorcycle stand-down at a racetrack, with different drills that would benefit everyone, rather than at the base theatre, where the first stand-down was held the year before.

Well it didn't happen then, but four years later it finally did. As the lead for motorcycle safety, my team and I believed that the regular stand-down just wasn't getting through to enough Sailors and dependents, or getting the job done. Granted, it was a check in the block, but that wasn't enough for us. Not to mention we were still having loads of accidents through rider error and awareness.

We had been doing the "routine" things but needed more, so I went to a local racetrack and spoke to the management about the feasibility and cost of having our stand down there. Then came the approval process and selling the idea up the chain of command. Everyone thought that the plan was sound and the positives great-



ly outweighed the negatives.

This new adventure started two days before the actual track day with a safety brief. It was mandatory for all motorcyclists, letting them know what to expect and how to prepare for the event. The track day itself started off with riders breaking into groups of 10-15, with lead and follow riders who had substantial riding experience. Another safety brief followed before the 130km ride to the track started. At that point we sent the groups off in 10 minute intervals to ensure we didn't have a massive group of 100 riders on the road all bunched together. When they reached the track there was plenty of time to mingle, look at bikes (it's what bikers do), and sign in.

The on-track portion of the day started at 0900. We pulled most of the drills, eight total, from the Basic RiderCourse/Experienced RiderCourse coaching guides. At the end of the day, we opened the track to those that had full leathers and all the requisite PPE, so they could ride the track at speed, or get extra instruction.

So, 2008 was our first year and the annual motorcycle safety stand down has become a huge success. Last year we added drills from the Military Sportbike RiderCourse as well. No mishaps of any kind, other than random maintenance issues, arose, and three years later, people are still

talking about how much they learned over the last few years during the track days. The only gripe heard about that day, was that it was hot, REALLY HOT!

If that's the worst, we can deal with that. The amazing thing is that we were thinking outside the box for a change, and bringing valuable hands-on training to a hugely important and highly-visible passion many of our Sailors have.

Now that we're in our third year, there are many lessons learned that are making it an even better evolution. Has this been a leap of faith? You bet. Has it helped or are we just throwing money into the fire? The results speak for themselves: In the last 3 years in Sigonella, there has been a 74percent reduction in accidents and an average of at least four or five fatalities is down to one or none. I would say it has been a massive success.

If we have learned anything, it's that if it can be done in Sigonella, it is possible to do anywhere. We can definitely tell you that most people learn something new and everyone has fun while reinforcing good solid riding habits and techniques. ■

BEFORE HE TRANSFERRED TO USS *THEODORE ROOSEVELT* (CVN-71), ABHC(AW/SW) JOHN MABRY WAS THE HEAD OF NAS SIGONELLA'S MOTORCYCLE SAFETY PROGRAM. HE PASSED THE REINS TO HIS FORMER ASSISTANT, AS1(AW/SW) JASON BLOCK.



Motorcycles Are Dangerous?

BY CAPT. NICK DAVENPORT

When you mention your passion for motorcycling to strangers, you're likely to get one of two replies. "Gee, I've always wanted to ride a motorcycle," is one predictable response. They suspect, just as you know, that motorcycling is fun. But the other likely response is an observation that "motorcycles are dangerous!" Then they'll regale you with a story about someone who was crushed flat by a steamroller while riding a motorcycle, and had to be picked up off the pavement with a spatula, or something to that effect.

We've all heard the isolated stories of motorcyclists who have been killed, or perhaps even been unfortunate enough to lose a friend, loved one or family member in a motorcycle crash. But then we're also aware of people who have enjoyed riding motorcycles all their lives and live to reminisce fondly about trips taken across the country and around the world.

Life isn't about complete risk avoidance, just managing risk as best possible, so we can continue to do the things we enjoy. So just how dangerous are motorcycles, really?

As Ken Obenski, motorcycle accident investigator and author of *Motorcycle Accident Reconstruction and Litigation* observes, "Motorcycles are safe, as long as you remember they're dangerous." Trying to adequately assess risk with such conflicting images is difficult, so let's look critically at the average motorcyclist, and see if we can learn from his experience.

The first thing to realize is that none of us is the average motorcyclist – he or she doesn't exist. If you ask us motorcycle riders, 85 percent of us will tell you that we're better than the average motorcyclist. This means that at least 35 percent of us are deluded. Even riders who have crashed two or three times are likely to consider themselves better-than-average riders. Statistics and real data may provide a better framework to estimate how good we are, and what we can do to improve our riding skills.

Can we gather anything from the current accident statistics? In 2008, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reported 5,290 deaths of motorcyclists in the US, with an estimated 96,000 more injured.

That means that roughly five percent of the reportable injury accidents result in death, or conversely, that the odds of your surviving any motorcycle injury accident are about 95 percent. And many of us have had spills and slides and bumps in our motorcycle careers that the police and paramedics never found out about. Maybe we were shaken up and scraped a bit, but we were lucky not to get badly hurt, so we picked up the bike, dusted off the jeans, and went on our way, trembling from the adrenaline surge and a bit wiser than

before. These were accidents, but they were “non-reportable.” I don’t know about you, but in my 50-year motorcycle career of 250,000+ miles, I’ve had about 15 to 20 of these. As they say, there are two kinds of motorcyclists, “those who’ve been down, and those who are going to go down.” We’re known as “experienced motorcyclists.”

Let’s look at some really experienced riders. Every two years since the early-eighties, a group of motorcyclists enter an extreme test of riding endurance known as the Iron Butt Rally. Riders compete to gain points in routes all over the United States, including Alaska and Canada, and cover over 1,000 miles PER DAY for 11 continuous days. That’s a lot of time in the saddle! The most recent running of the Iron Butt Rally was held last summer. Of the 101 contestants, about a sixth didn’t finish. Collectively the riders covered 940,000 miles, had four minor, two moderate, and four major accidents (four of them were deer strikes), and one fatality. Among average motorcyclists, there’s about one death per 2.5 million miles covered, and about 20 times as many reportable accidents (one per 125K miles). In this instance the Iron Butt contestants had a reportable mishap rate of one per 94K miles, which isn’t too bad when you think of the extreme conditions they’re riding under. And in the history of the rally, there has been only one other fatal accident during the event, making their fatality rate less than one per 3 million miles, lower than the national average.

You’ll notice a pattern in these statistics – the minor scrapes and bruises are much more common than injury accidents, which are also more frequent than

fatalities. That’s good, since it means most of us can become experienced motorcyclists and hopefully survive the process.

Life isn’t about complete risk avoidance, just managing risk as best possible...

All this brings me to the “Accident Pyramid.” This was first described in 1931 by H. W. Heinrich, who was reporting on accidents in industry in his book *Industrial Accident Prevention: A Scientific Approach*. The theory is that incidents (near misses) are much more common than minor injury-accidents, which are in turn more common than major injury-accidents. The base layer of the pyramid is composed of incidents, the middle layer represents the minor injuries, and the top is the major injury-accident. Heinrich estimated the ratio

was about 300:29:1. The implication is that if you pay attention to the base layer (the near misses), you can learn a lot from them since they’re so frequent relative to the major incidents. If you can minimize the near-misses, you’ll reduce the injuries and eventual deaths that result.

Can we apply the concept of the accident pyramid to our own motorcycling experience and improve our safety? I think we can.

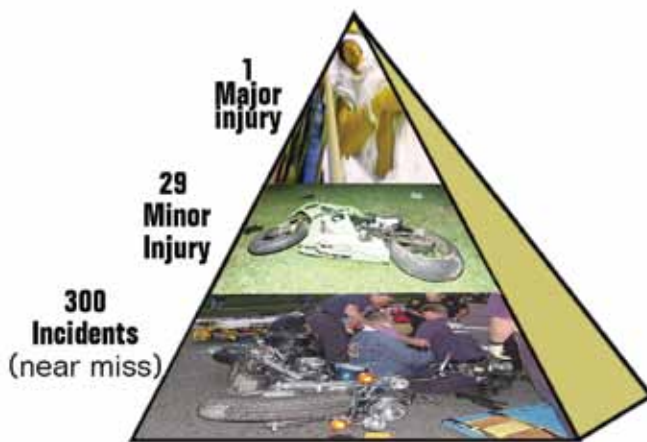
The Motorcycle Accident Pyramid is composed of the sorts of things we’re exposed to as motorcyclists in our daily riding. Different riders conceptually have different sized pyramids, depending on their experience level, risk



The author speeds around the corkscrew at Laguna Seca racetrack.

behaviors, safety attitude, etc. The five layers are shown in the following diagram.

The base layer – Anomalies - are those sorts of things that may happen every day, that we take in stride as experienced motorcyclists, such as recognizing and avoiding diesel spills, anticipating the left-turning driver coming towards us and braking appropriately, and spotting that red-light running driver before we enter an intersection. We're looking for these sorts of things, anticipating them, and when they happen we're not surprised and handle the event safely. "I could just tell he was going to drift into my lane, that's why I held back" you mutter to yourself inside your helmet. No drama, just part of being a competent motorcyclist on today's busy streets.



<http://emeetingplace.com/safetyblog/?p=275>

The next layer of the Pyramid I'll call "Scares." These are unanticipated, cause you to startle and have to react suddenly, and leave you with that adrenaline surge to deal with if it otherwise doesn't lead to a real accident. This is the driver that suddenly cuts you off, forcing a panic braking reaction, or the "almost lost it in a curve" event when you come in too hot, or running over that truck tire remnant in the freeway at night that you didn't see in time in the beam of your headlight. Your heart races, your mouth is dry as cotton, and your face would be pale for the next few minutes if you could see it in your mirror. You certainly take a few deep breaths and may have to pull off to the side of the road if you can't control the jitters for the next few minutes afterward. This is the typical survival "stress reaction" – a big surge of adrenaline that gears you up for fight or flight. YOU REMEMBER THESE, since evolution ensures that possible life-or-death events are retained in the brain by the animal that experiences them! These are the teaching events we're going to use to enhance our survival skills.

The top three layers, Accidents, Injuries, and Death are where something actually happened – they're self-explanatory, and we're going to ignore them for the moment - we don't want them! We're going to concentrate

on the Scares layer to hopefully shrink our pyramid and make the top layers less likely to happen.

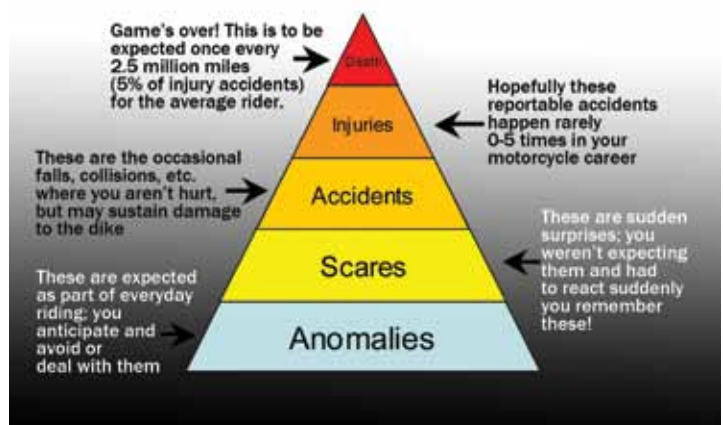
Scare events hopefully aren't that frequent in your riding experience. I can think of about five or six that I've had over the last eight years of riding. How many can you think of in your motorcycle career? If you've had a bunch, your "Accident Pyramid" may be bigger than the average motorcyclist. Analyze the Scare layer to understand how to make it smaller, and your whole pyramid shrinks proportionally.

Here's the drill. Write all these Scares down. Write whatever you can remember of the circumstances of each. Analyze them to the detail you need to see what caused the problem, what mistakes you may have made, and what you might have done differently to avoid them. Now look to see if there are any common patterns among them. If there are, you may discover habits or conditions you can change to shrink your pyramid.

As an example, of my six recent Scares, five of them occurred from drivers unexpectedly moving into my lane, causing me to have to brake suddenly, head for the shoulder, or accelerate to get out of their way. In each, I was momentarily in the driver's blind spot, but they'd have seen me if they'd done the typical head-check before changing lanes. Why didn't they?

A pattern began to emerge. In each instance the event had occurred where a multi-lane street split in two directions at a "Y" junction. In each situation, I was in the branch which had less traffic flow, and I was in the outside lane accelerating around a slower car that also had also branched in my direction. The drivers didn't EXPECT

Motorcycle "Accident Pyramid"



a faster moving vehicle next to them at that point, and neglected the head check as they negotiated the turn and changed lanes. In one of my Scares, I'd done the same thing to a fast-approaching car in a similar turn, forcing him to swing wide. Luckily he was alert too.

Pictured below is one of these intersections. As I went back and looked at these intersections, in some of them, the highway department had even painted solid white lane markers at these points, indicating drivers should use extra caution when changing lanes. They were already aware of something I'd not noticed before. The more I thought about it, I realized in an accident years ago, another driver had cut across my lane in the same situation and I'd hit her left rear fender. Luckily in that accident, I was driving a Suburban rather than my motorcycle. Clearly I had a habit problem which if I didn't break, would likely lead to another accident some day.

Another rider analyzed his five Scares and realized all of them were from the typical left-turning motorist violating his right of way. He recognized he had a conspicuity problem. He outfitted his bike with extra running lights, wears more visible and reflective clothing, and now wears a white instead of a black helmet.

Hopefully we've both shrunk our pyramids a bit.

Analyze your own pyramid and let us know what you find out. We'd be interested in your results and opinions, and may publish your lessons learned in a future issue of Smart Ride.

So now do I head out the door feeling safe? Nope! None of us is the average motorcyclist, and we can't take comfort in statistics. That point has been proven more than once by a brand new rider who has graduated from the Basic Rider Course, then gone screaming down the road and launched himself into a tree. Every ride is a challenge – it's a matter of risk management.

Is motorcycling dangerous? I think Ken summarized it best when he said, "Motorcycles are safe, as long as you remember they're dangerous." Go out and enjoy the ride, but keep your pyramids small. ■

CAPT. NICK DAVENPORT IS THE HEAD OF THE AEROMEDICAL DIVISION AT THE NAVAL SAFETY CENTER AND AN AVID RIDER.

... I was momentarily in the driver's blind spot, but they'd have seen me if they'd done the typical head-check before changing lanes.



CASESTUDY:

How One Rider Learned to Look Twice





“Look Twice-Save A Life, Motorcycles Are Everywhere”

BY LCDR. JASON BRAGG

P*ast Experience:* My Dad has always had motorcycles and I liked to ride with him when I was a kid. I got my first motorcycle when I was 14 and learned how to ride it in our back yard and an empty lot next door. After a few months of practice I turned 15 and started riding on the street. One of my first real street rides was an all-day event with about 10 other riders hosted by the Christian Motorcyclist Association and I was hooked. I rode to high school almost every day, and throughout college, my only vehicle was a motorcycle. My “ensign-mobile” was a new sport bike in 1998 and I proceeded to put over 70,000 miles on that ZX-9 over the course of about 6 years, years which included two WESTPAC deployments. I’ve taken several MSF courses as well as on-track performance riding training. I’ve been riding on the street for 18 years and had never been in an accident with another vehicle, until recently.

Recent Experience: About a month before the accident, I trucked my bike down to Florida and put about 600 miles on it over the course of 3 days, riding around Daytona Beach for bike week and along Florida’s East Coast. I rode my bike to work several times in the preceding weeks and took the Experienced Riders Course and Sport Bike Rider Course just days prior to the accident.

The Accident: I pulled out from a stop sign in front of a car that was blocked from view by turning traffic. I looked left and saw the turning vehicle, then looked right and pulled out to make a left turn. A Lexus was going by the turning traffic, locked up the brakes, and skidded into the side of my bike, hitting the rear wheel area and violently knocking the bike out from under me. I rag drolled onto the asphalt and landed on my left knee, coming to rest on my left side in a fetal position, wondering how I got hit.

Witnesses quickly handled the stopping of traffic, calling of ambulances, and checking to see that I was alive. After what seemed like an eternity of lying in the street talking to the paramedics, they loaded me into the ambulance and let me call my wife.

Reflecting on the accident, I believe I would have done the same thing if I had been in my 4000 pound pickup truck. If I had, it is likely that I would have sustained less injury, but also likely that the family in the Lexus would have been in considerably worse condition.

Maybe things happen for a reason. Maybe I should’ve looked left again.

Aftermath: A month later, post knee surgery and out of flight status for another month, I know it could have been worse. My injury was relatively minor on the grand scale, only a fractured patella and a sprained wrist. I was wearing more than the minimum required protective gear, including a full face helmet and protective jacket, gloves and boots. Protective pants with knee armor would have been useful, but I was wearing basic denim. My medical and automotive insurance have covered the significant medical bills and vehicle damage that resulted and I can get around with the aid of a cane and knee brace.

Point: This is not a morbid tale, but a word of caution. If you think it can’t happen to you, think again. No one is invincible. If you ride, be realistic about the risk you take. We all do a lot of inherently risky things, but that doesn’t mean we can’t do them smarter. Take this as a plea to stay alert and wear protective gear no matter who you are or what you are driving. Ride within your limits and don’t fuel the negative stereotypes motorcyclists seem to generate. I encourage everyone to keep insurance paid up, registration current, to follow regulations, and be prepared for things “just in case.”

There’s a motorcycle awareness campaign whose slogan is “look twice-save a life, motorcycles are everywhere” (<http://genepearson.org>). You can be sure I will be looking twice in the future. ■



TAKIN' IT TO THE TRACK...

BY YN2(SS) ADAM EVANS

Last August, riders in the Pacific Northwest got a chance to show their stuff and learn a lot during Military Track Day at Pacific Raceways in Kent, Washington, with Northeast Sports Bike Association (NESBA). Many DoD employee riders from several different branches of the armed services participated in the event. There was a mix of skill levels ranging from first time track riders all the way up to advanced and professional riders that compete in races. The event was coordinated by EMC(SS) Derek L. Hicks from USS OHIO (SSGN 726)(GOLD), who also races for WMRRA (Washington Motorcycle Road Racing Association).

"The track is the safest place to get the 'speed bug' out of a rider's system. These riders get to go out in nearly-perfect conditions and take themselves to the limit. Most seasoned track riders will tell you the quickest way to slow a rider down on the streets, is to let them go as fast as they want on the track. The reason for this is the realization that motorcycles can give and take much more than their riders can handle," Hicks said.

"I went to the track day thinking that it would be easy; that I would be able to whip around the track like I was Valentino Rossi (eight-time world champion motorcycle racer). However, it became clear to me, that this was not

***STS2(SS) RAYMOND MOON, A PARTICIPANT IN THE EVENT, SAID
HIS IMPRESSIONS ABOUT SPEED DEFINITELY CHANGED THANKS
TO THE EXPERIENCE...***

the case as soon as I got on the track. I was taken back for a bit when I realized that I'm not as talented as I originally thought," STS2(SS) Raymond Moon said.

Moon also said he learned why there are different level classes for track riders and control riders who are there to mentor less experienced track riders.

"My first session, I had a bad tendency to not look through a turn and I would also drop to a lower gear than I needed to, which meant my bike would fish tail. After these issues were pointed out and I corrected myself, I had a safer and more enjoyable experience on the track," he said.

Safety is a major concern on the track, and precautions are taken to ensure that riders are educated and outfitted. The protective equipment requirement is very stringent. Riders must wear full leather, which means no street clothes are allowed. The leather gear protects riders' skin from road rash and other potential injuries sustained from the impact of a crash. Extensive inspections were conducted on riders' gear and motorcycles before anyone was allowed to enter the track.

MMCS(SS/SW) Dave Landes is a control rider for NESBA. He believes track days like this one are necessary for sport bike riders, and that they learn things that build on skills students begin to learn in the Military Sport Bike Rider Course.

"The biggest thing I thought about as I saw the one Army EOD soldier throw his Ducati away in turn two – unhurt with the exception of maybe his pride – was that the sole reason he ran off of the track was something he would never incur in a parking lot through the course of the existing Sport Bike Rider Course. Another rider in close proximity actually startled him where he lost focus and he stood the bike up running off the outside of turn two. Racers know to expect this, but again this reinforces real training that isn't included in existing parking lot courses," Landes said.

He also believes that the best use of track days is to let Sailors and Marines get their speed fix in a relatively safe environment.

"I'd like to think that everyone can effectively get their fix at the track and control themselves on the street, reserving aggressive riding for a controlled environment," he said.

Control riders like Landes are there to teach proper technique and smooth control to inexperienced riders. The purpose of a control rider is to watch others and assist them skill, track lines (paths), and to give advice and feedback. They are also out to enforce all aspects of safety, including watching for people riding above their skill level. If a rider looks too nervous, or does not have the confidence to ride at a faster pace, the control rider will get in front and have the rider slow down and follow, leading by example. Control riders also enforce track rules for each class level. For example, in the beginner and intermediate classes, people are only allowed to pass other riders in certain areas of the track.

At first glance, Military Track Day may seem to be a Mecca for speed freaks and thrill seekers and encourage speeding and street racing. On the contrary, these riders said that experiencing speed in a controlled environment teaches them how dangerous riding on the street can be. Many track riders no longer ride on the street because of the dangers of road debris, obstacles, animals, environmental conditions, and most of all, other motorists.

The riders who attended Military Track Day insist that they are now less likely to speed on the streets because of their experiences on the track.

"I have a newfound respect for the aspects of speed. I was able to get the bike up to 160 mph on the straight away, but that was after four sessions on the track. I also had a few close calls going through some of the corners too quickly. Doing this track day allows you to realize that there is a time and place for speeding, which is not on the streets. Trying to go 160 mph on a regular street or highway is just not smart. It's one of the quickest ways to get yourself killed," Moon said.

YN2(SS) Adam Evans, PSNS & IMF Bangor, Command Motorcycle Safety Coordinator

GET DIRTY!

Dirtbike & ATV Riding Techniques



BY BONNIE WARCH AND ANDREA BEACH

Sailors and Marines aren't afraid of getting dirty. One of the most enjoyable ways to add a layer of mud is by spending the day out on the trails, riding a dirt bike or all-terrain vehicle (ATV).

Many people learn to ride as children, but others take up the sport as adults. Either way, some extra training is always a good thing since dirt bikes and ATVs operate differently than street bikes and are also different from each other. The Motorcycle Safety Foundation has created DirtBike School, which is available in select locations, and there are other regional courses that offer hands-on, outdoor motorcycle, dirt bike, or ATV classes.

We teach courses out in San Diego that are free for active-duty riders or active-duty dependants age 16 and older. Retired military can also participate on a space available basis.





For current dirt and street riders, our four and a half hour class is centered on your current riding level. It begins with proper dirt bike cornering techniques and correct body posture for each riding situation. Proper sitting, standing, and how to be active with the motorcycle are essential techniques taught in the class. Plus, efficient braking practice, up and down hills, obstacles, trails and more, makes a huge difference in your ultimate performance.

For those who have never ridden a motorcycle before, the class progresses based on your ability and rate of learning. We start right from the beginning: operation of controls, cornering, braking, up and down hills. That's what you need to get started on a great day of riding. Everyone will develop a sense of "real-world" trail riding.

The ATV Safety Institute ATV RiderCourse provides a fast-paced, half-day, hands-on training session which includes a pre-ride inspection, starting and stopping, quick turns, hill riding, emergency stopping and swerving, and riding over obstacles. Students also learn about protective gear, local regulations, places to ride and environmental concerns. This is something many people don't think about, but it's become increasingly important.

Of course, PPE is important for every rider, both on the street and off road. During any training course we teach, students must wear:

- DOT-approved motorcycle helmet
- Goggles or face shield
- Over-the-ankle boots
- Dirtbike or motorcycle gloves
- Long pants
- Long sleeve shirt or jacket

If you aren't in the San Diego area, there are still techniques for turning, breaking, going up and down hills, traversing hillsides, ruts and bumps, and riding slalom that must be emphasized and practiced.

When first learning, be safe and have fun. Try to show good control and judgment, and stay away from negative peer pressure. Keep your speeds down. Low speed is all you need for the exercises and it will help you develop control of your motorcycle. Believe it or not, it is much more difficult to go slow and show control than it is to fly down a straight dirt road at 60mph doing a wheelie.



Set goals to challenge yourself. Try to make your turns tighter, and then try at slower speeds. Strive to up your own ante. The key to what you learn is practice. After you take a class, don't just go riding. Go practice. The great rides come with great skill, and the skill comes from practice.

You also need to learn to read the terrain. Look ahead to see if the ground has deep sand, mud, or hard pack, and then determine how hard or soft you need to brake. Once you understand proper braking techniques, no downhill will scare you.

It's also important to think constantly about how you can become an extension of your vehicle. These vehicle types require different riding styles, body positions and postures, so make sure you know what you're riding and how to become one with it. Again, this all comes with practice.

A basic training class is strongly recommended for each type of riding you want to do.

So take a class and then get out there and practice your skills. There's nothing like the thrill of off-road riding. The better you are at it, the more fun you're going to have.

And fun is what it's all about. ■

BONNIE WARCH AND ANDREA BEACH ARE INSTRUCTORS WITH COACH2RIDE. LEARN MORE ABOUT FREE COURSES FOR MILITARY MEMBERS AT WWW.COACH2RIDE.COM.

THE SCOOP FOR COAST GUARD RIDERS: TRAINING IS MOVING FORWARD

Serving in the U.S. Coast Guard is rewarding and challenging. Like our counterparts in the Department of Defense (DoD), we take considerable risks in the performance of our duties, and at any given moment there is the potential for loss of life. Likewise, when it comes to recreational motorcycling, whether on the road, a track or off-road, we take risks, and for some, the risk comes with severe consequences. The senseless loss of life impacts families and the unit's ability to perform their mission. As service members, we train relentlessly to recognize, assess and control the risks inherent to our duties. As motorcyclists, we should be doing the same thing each and every time we ride. To mitigate the motorcycle mishaps within the Coast Guard, leadership, in conjunction with the Joint Safety Service Council, is committed to improving and aligning the traffic safety program with the other branches of the Armed Forces.

U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters Office of Safety and Environmental Health, Commandant (CG-113), along with Health, Safety and Work-Life (HSWL) Support Activity and the other service branches have teamed up to offer more motorcycle safety training opportunities. Coast Guard policy requires that active duty members who ride motorcycles, on or off the installation, complete a Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) or state approved motorcycle training course. If you need training and are close to a DoD installation, inquire with the installation safety office about motorcycle safety training and request a quota.

If stationed near a U.S. Navy installation, you can sign up for training on the internet at www.navymotorcyclerrider.com. If training is not available at a Coast Guard or DoD facility, email the HSWL motorcycle training coordinator, Mike Leuck, at michael.j.leuck@uscg.mil, to request training through a local state provider. Commandant (CG-1132), the Division of Shore Safety, is in the process of working to establish a motorcycle training infrastructure at Coast Guard facilities. Soon, you will have more opportunities to get the training you need.

Advanced or follow-on training is the next step in a rider's continuing education. Although not currently required by policy, if you've completed the Basic Rider Course (BRC), you're encouraged to take follow-on training. For sport bike riders, the Navy and Marine Corps offer MSF's Military SportBike RiderCourse (MSRC). For cruiser and touring riders, there is MSF's Experienced RiderCourse (ERC) or Advanced RiderCourse (ARC). The ARC is the same course as the MSRC but is designed for all motorcycle riders. Furthermore, track days and civilian police motorcycle classes offer additional training opportunities. All of these courses are designed to educate and further develop your skills.

Coast Guard leaders are working to provide an internal safety infrastructure that will include access to more training, motorcycle specific safety information and events, and the establishment of a motorcycle mentorship program. These programs have the capability to assist riders in reducing their potential for being involved in a mishap. While we move forward to provide you a more robust traffic safety program, take advantage of the programs being offered through local USCG facilities, DoD installations or state programs.

Take charge of your riding career: Get trained, wear your protective gear, be a mentor and ride safe!

If you would like to get involved or need additional information on improving your unit's motorcycle safety program, please contact Commandant (CG-1132) point of contact, Dale A. Wisnieski, at 202-475-5206, or dale.a.wisnieski@uscg.mil.

Semper Paratus ■



Don't Skip the Pre-Ride Check

BY AOCM(AW/SW) OBIE LOYOLA

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riday, September 25, a little after 6 p.m., I could have been in a serious accident that probably would have cost me my life. I could have been a safety hazard to other motorists, an accident waiting to happen. It would have been a serious casualty because I failed to do my part.

As I was doing my standard pre-ride check, I noticed that my brake light was not coming on as I was squeezing my front brake lever. It did come on when I stepped on my rear brakes. I do have a linked braking system (1993 Honda CBR1000F) and mostly, I usually use just the front brakes.

So I started the basic trouble shooting technique: Isolation of parts. I knew the light bulbs were fine since they were working with the rear brakes, so I disconnected the two wires connected to the brake light switch and conducted a voltage check with my multi meter. It registered that I had a good 12VDC.

My next step was to jump the wires. The brake lights should come on, and they did. Just to be sure, I did a continuity check in the switch itself. It should have continuity when the button is pressed, as this simulates braking. When I pressed the button, there was no continuity so I figured "Yep, that's the problem!"

The bike is sixteen years old, with 73,000 miles and the switch had served its purpose. I called a local motorcycle parts store, and luckily, one was in stock for \$16.99. It was the smartest \$17 investment I ever spent on my bike. It's been a very reliable bike, so far. I take care of preventive maintenance and I don't mind spending \$17 for my own and other commuters' safety.



The culprit: A faulty brake switch.

You see, if I had skipped the pre-ride check, I could have been traveling at highway speeds before I realized the continuity problem in my brake switch. If that had happened, I probably wouldn't be writing this article.

Most accidents can be prevented. They usually come down to several contributing factors, some of which we can, and some of which we cannot change.

Training is important, but you can't forget the pre-ride inspection. All of my training would have been irrelevant if I had "gun decked" my pre-ride check.

With motorcycles, you don't always get a second chance, so do it right the first time. ■

AOCM(AW/SW) OBIE LOYOLA IS ASSIGNED TO USS JOHN C. STENNIS (CVN 74) AND IS AN MSF RIDER COACH.

Profile of a Fatal Rider

- Sport bike rider
- First year motorcycle rider
- No formal training
- Under 30 years of age
- Exceeding safe speed for the conditions
- Made a poor decision or failed to identify hazards
- Does not know his/her limitations on the bike
- Bike modifications unknown or beyond the rider's understanding
- Most likely riding on a weekend

Don't be this rider. If you fit any of the above criteria, you're riding on borrowed time. Take responsibility for your life. Remember the Motorcycle Safety Foundation's key messages:

- **Get trained and licensed**
- **Wear protective gear – all the gear, all the time – including a helmet manufactured to the standards set by the DOT**
- **Ride unimpaired by alcohol or other drugs**
- **Ride within your own skill limits**
- **Be a lifelong learner by taking refresher rider courses**



Hey Marines!

Motorcycle safety is a matter of force preservation and mission readiness. Getting trained is the best way to ride safe. Here are the Marine Corps Motorcycle Training Guidelines:

- Every motorcycle rider must complete the Basic Rider Course (BRC). The BRC teaches fundamental riding skills such as breaking, turning, and low-speed maneuvering. Thinking about buying a bike? The BRC is for you!
- Within 120 days of completing the BRC, all riders must attend the next level of training – the Experienced Rider Course (ERC) for cruiser riders, or the Military Sportbike Rider Course (MSRC) for sport bike riders.
- Ideally, this next level of training will be completed right after the BRC. There is no “experience period” required between the BRC and ERC/MSRC.
- In most states, the BRC is the only requirement to receive a valid motorcycle endorsement – often making mostly inexperienced riders street legal. These riders should attend the ERC/MSRC as soon as possible after the BRC to further develop their skills on their own bikes before hitting the streets.
- The ERC and MSRC are intended to ensure that a Marine can operate his or her own motorcycle at “real world” speeds.
- All riders must have a valid motorcycle endorsement or license to operate any motorcycle on public roads.
- Motorcycle riding Marines should be active members in an installation/ base-sponsored motorcycle mentorship program or club.
- All riders must complete follow-on training every three years.

MARINE CORPS EXCHANGE TRAINING COMPLETION PPE COUPONS!

Motorcycle safety course graduates (BRC, ERC, and MSRC) are eligible for a 25% off coupon to purchase PPE at the MCX.

In order to receive the coupon, all you have to do is have MCX privileges and successfully complete an installation/ base-sponsored motorcycle course.



A large, dark tree trunk dominates the center of the frame. The background shows a road with a yellow line, surrounded by trees and foliage. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

**Motorcycle Training
Doesn't Matter...**

... Until it Does!